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CONTEMPORARY ART IN RUSSIA

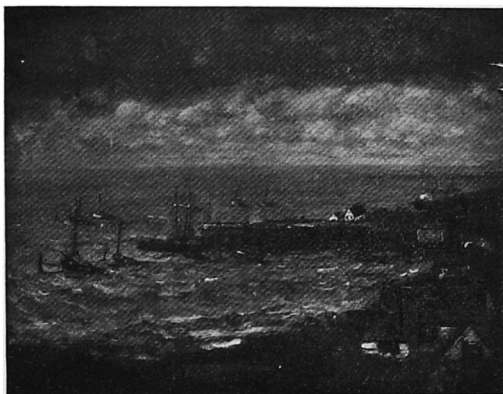
A Russian correspondent writes from Moscow that this year's exhibition by the artists' society known as the "Soyouz" was not particularly rich in remarkable works, but for this want there is compensation in the great variety and many-sidedness of the exhibits, which included practically all kinds of modern painting, black-and-white works, and applied art.

As usual, T. Maliavine captured the great public by the dazzling brightness of his colors, although on this occasion he is less satisfying to the experienced critic. Quite masterly and quite beautiful is the bold combination of the glowing red shawl with the greenish blue bordering worn by one of the two peasant women, but the pose of the figure to the right is not very natural, and the background of green and lilac appears to me banal and somewhat sugary. It has been said of Maliavine's delicate and characteristic drawings that they remind one of Ingres, and it may now be added that in his painting also, with its metallic ring, resembles the French master.

Among the leaders of the Moscow art-circle, K. Korovine hardly seemed to be on his old level; but V. Seroff interested one with a picturesque interior, and with a small drawing of the Belgian violinist Ysaye — a work full of temperament. A. Vasnetzoff, who of recent years has familiarized us with his able reconstructions of Russian life of the seventeenth century, made a great effect with a simple landscape, in which the sodden earth, the bright green of the birches, and the moist air poetically suggested the melancholy note of the northern spring, nay, carried conviction to the heart of the holder.

M. Vroubel contributed two little pictures, wherein he catches the delicate beauty of mother-of-pearl and gets the charm of a bouquet of light lilac-colored campanulas in the most wonderful way; while the decorative talents of S. Mallontine are strikingly displayed in a set of furniture of his own design and manufacture. The rich and handsome carvings in the primitive style, the delicate gray or brown tint of his woods serve to compensate for certain defects of construction. The Baba-Yaga, by this artist, possesses true painter's qualities, as do many other of his oil-paintings, and admirably suggests the character of the legendary witch of Russia; but where is one to hang a canvas such as this, whose theme is more suitable for an illustration? Marrontine has erred as many another artist the world over is daily erring.

S. Ivanoff depicts in his broad, sketchy, and rather flat manner, a group of merry girls at carnival-time in a Russian village, the yellow sheepskins and bright-colored kerchiefs standing out effectively against the snow-



SEPTEMBER GALE—NOANK
By Henry W. Ranger
Courtesy of Dr. A. C. Humphreys

covered roofs. L. Pasternak was represented here in great variety. In a series of admirable illustrations for a popular story by Count Tolstoy, and in a number of charming colored scenes of childhood, he maintains his reputation as one of the best of Russian draughtsmen; and in an intimate lively-toned portrait of a lady he revealed himself a delicate painter; while in a large canvas, entitled

"Souvenir d'Italie," he makes a most successful incursion into the realm of monumental art. In this picturesque composition the painter has portrayed his vision of the slumbering Italian Renaissance — the three principal centres, Florence, Venice, and Milan, being symbolized in a sleeping group. This graceful symbolism is legitimate and perfectly patent, and is wholly convincing to all who behold the notable work.

Among the landscapists, most attention is attracted by T. Grabar. With his "pointillist" technic he has succeeded in representing most faithfully and naturally the strong light effect of the Russian winter. But far more pleasing than his winter pictures is his "Interior," which is, to all intents and purposes, still life, with its impressionist summer-like breakfast table and its gold-gleaming samovar; and the same of his tea-party in the open air, with the warm evening glow over all. One must



NOANK STREET
By Henry W. Ranger
Courtesy of W. T. Evans

not think for sentiment in these pictures ; their healthy realism and this picturesque handling must suffice. N. Tarkhoff is another thorough-paced "pointillist," but in his case the results obtained in no way justify this technic.

Good landscape-work was also contributed by P. Petrovitcheff, whose coloring is as sound and harmonious as ever ; K. Youon, who was certainly more interesting last year; S. Joukovsky, who seeks sunset effects; Baron Klodt N. Dosekine, and others. V. Borisoff-Mousatoff, exhibiting for the first time at the "Soyouz," sent several large compositions, the tasteful color scheme of which cannot be denied. At the same time, his everlasting crinolines and shawls and chevelures are not very convincing, and have a sort of masquerading effect. Mousatoff, with his predilection for the eighteenth century, unites the Moscow group of the "Soyouz" with that of St. Petersburg.

As the two chief cities of Russia differ, so differ these two art groups most emphatically, as is at once evi-

dent to one's eyes. In Moscow, the first oil-painting—the Tableau de Chevalet—reigns supreme ; while with the artists of the Neva side—apart from a few exceptions, such as O. Braz, with his life-size ladies' portraits—all the preference is for water-colors, pastel, gouache, black-and-white, etc., and for a small or even a minute format. Thus K. Somoff would seem to have almost entirely abandoned oils in favor of the methods just mentioned and to the cultivating more and more the petit-maitre manner. His spirituelle vignettes book-covers, costume pictures, illustrations, etc., which lean in the direction of the rococo, are executed with extraordinary finesse, sometimes



PEACEFUL MOONLIGHT REVERIES

By Henry W. Ranger

Courtesy of Dr. A. C. Humphreys

quite in the miniature manner, yet always bear the stamp of the true artist and the refined stylist. A calendar recently designed by him is a striking example of this side of Somoff's talent.

Illustrations more or less successful and technically satisfactory were contributed by A. Benois, E. Lanceray, and L. Bakst. Both in point of quantity and quality the first place in this category falls to Benois for his distinguished illustrations of one of Puschkin's poems, which, however, was familiar to many visitors by reason of having appeared in one of the numbers of *Mir Iskousstva*. Moreover, they then in their reduced form — the admirable xylographic reproductions of Miss Ostrogumoff — produced a most artistic effect, which shows that the artist grasped all the essentials of the work.

Miss A. Ostragumoff, who is perhaps the only Russian lady xylographist, displays her art in many beautiful plates, for the most part representing Italian and St. Petersburg garden scenes. The artist avoids strong color effects, be it understood, but seeks to obtain the intimate, delicate tone harmonies of the wood-block ; and thus, with surest sense of style, invests her plates with a certain feminine poetry.

A decidedly poetic note is struck also in the beautiful pastels and water-colors of M. Doboujinski, who has never before been so copiously represented. He delights in the picturesque by-streets and silent courtyards of the provincial towns, as also in the working-quarters of the capital, whose monotony he most artistically conveys. A pleasant surprise awaits one in the color dwellings of a quiet young lady artist, Miss A. Lindermann, which remind one somewhat of Carl Larsson, but reveal a more youthful temperament.

Last, but not least, are the decorative designs by A. Golorine for one of Ibsen's dramas, full of feeling, and in point of color very beautiful. A special gallery of the "Soyouz" exhibition is devoted to the work of the untimely deceased Marie Jacountchikoff.

R. C.



THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS IN ROME

Public interest is newly stimulated in the American academy of Fine Arts in Rome by its recent incorporation by act of Congress, by the purchase of a villa for its permanent home in the splendid old city, and by the raising of a large endowment fund for its maintenance. For nine years the academy has carried on its work quietly, a small body of artists struggling to keep it on its feet.

Now the \$1,000,000 endowment fund for the maintenance of the academy has been completed by the subscription of \$100,000 by H. C. Frick, it is further proposed to raise \$200,000 more for a library for the institution.